

The Computer Support Newsletter

September 2004

<http://msa.ars.usda.gov/computerhelp>

email news: sntucker@msa-stoneville.ars.usda.gov

Computer Support Newsletter Audience

A note to our many readers.....

This newsletter is published mainly to inform MSA employees of Information Technology (IT) news and happenings. Much of the newsletter will relate to the local user base. If you are NOT at Stoneville, some of the contained items may not be relevant to you.

Automatic Updates on Wednesday, August 25, 2004.

Should I Install SP2?

No. At the beginning of August ARS OCIO sent an email to all Area Computer Specialist advising them to disable updating to SP2 on all ARS PCs.

Where to find ARS software

You can download the latest version of supported ARS software from the MSA Computer Help website. You will need a password to access most of the software. You can get the password by calling Sonja Tucker at 662-686-5305. The website is:

<http://msa.ars.usda.gov/computerhelp>

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Why or why not?

It has been widely documented that some of SP2's "enhancements" may have a negative impact on functionality. Additionally, the Microsoft Firewall may be automatically enabled on PCs, which may affect connectivity.

Unused Software

Unused software on your hard drive can negatively impact your overall system performance, particularly as your hard drive starts to fill near capacity. Your Windows operating system relies on free hard disk space as a virtual memory repository where it can store active programs and data when it's RAM fills up.

Windows XP SP2

What is Windows XP SP2?

On a regular basis Microsoft combines fixes, enhancements, and new technologies into one convenient package called a service pack. The latest Service Pack for Windows XP is Service Pack 2 (SP2). SP2 is a major security-focused operating system upgrade that includes an enhanced Windows firewall and a console (Windows Security Center) to monitor the state of your computer's security.

When will SP2 be available?

SP2 became available for Windows XP Professional through Windows Update or

What should I do?

ARS OCIO has begun testing the service pack and will provide a detailed analysis of those test results once completed. Until they fully test SP2, it is unclear how employees would be impacted. As soon as we are able to analyze their report and determine the impact on the MSA, we will send out further information.

New PC Setup

We are getting a lot of questions concerning new PC setup and software installations. Here are a few tips to help with your new computer setup.

When you get your new PC, go through the software preloaded on the hard drive with a fine-toothed comb. Chances are you'll find applications, sample programs, demos, and data you'll never use. Use the Windows Control Panels "Add / Remove programs" to delete unneeded software for better performance down the road. This includes unneeded Windows components like MSN Explorer, Outlook Express and Windows Messenger.

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Agency News

PCMS Web

The PCMS Web Application is ready for use! The functionality of the PCMS Web version is the same as the client server version with added enhancements. An overview of PCMS FY04.2 release is available at:

www.usda.gov/procurement/card/info.html

The PCMS client server version will no longer be available for use after September 15, 2004. Future use of PCMS and SAMS applications will only be available via the Internet at the following URL:

<http://www.nfc.usda.gov/corporate/PCMS.htm>

Installation instructions for PCMSWeb can be found at the following URL:

http://www.nfc.usda.gov/corporate/PCMSDesk_topSetupProcedures.doc

Uninstall instruction for the client server version of PCMS can be found at:

http://www.nfc.usda.gov/corporate/PCMSUninstall_client.doc

The Discoverer application is scheduled for release in October. Until then, LAPCs will continue to use the client server version of Discoverer.

e-Authentication

In July, the Department launched its e-Authentication initiative which required all ARS employees to complete a registration process via a website that authenticates who you are based on certain data that is validated against the National Finance Center data. The following link provides more specific information distributed by the Department on its requirement that all USDA employees complete the credentialing registration.

[eAuthentication Instructions](#)

If you have not registered for eAuthentication please do so now.

For technical assistance, please contact the Department's eAuthentication Help Desk at eAuthHelpDesk@usda.gov

For more information about the registration process, please contact the Agency Employee Registration Lead, Jim Neal, at 301-504-5667 or email jneal@ars.usda.gov

Security Awareness Training

All ARS employees that use Agency computer systems to perform their duties are required to take the annual security awareness course. In order to ensure that everyone is able to

successfully complete the training, five training options are being offered:

- 1) Employees that have successfully eAuthenticated may take the web based course by going to <http://www.aglearn.usda.gov>
- 2) Employees that have not eAuthenticated but are GoLearn Users may take the web based course by going to <http://www.golearn.gov>
- 3) Employees that are non-ARS users may take the web based course by going to <http://www.info.usda.gov/egovtraining/securitytraining.html>
- 4) Users that are unable to access the course via the web may take the Computer Based Training (CBT) course on compact disc (CD). See your LAO or computer support personnel.
- 5) And for those users that are unable to access the course on a computer, the course content is available in booklet form. See your LAO or computer support personnel.

Employees that take the course using option 1 will automatically be tracked. All employees that complete the course using another option should verify they have completed the course by printing a course completion certificate. **We do not need a copy; but your Location Office may be called upon to answer to the**

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number who were successful in completing the course.

Tips and Tricks

Windows XP - Use Backup to Protect Data

The Backup utility in Windows XP Professional helps you protect data from accidental loss if your system hardware or storage media fails. Click [here](#) to learn how.

Groupwise 6.02 Stoneville Server Users– SPAM Filtering

At the beginning of August, the Area IT office moved to using only software to flag potential SPAM email. If you find your mailbox is being bombarded with unwanted Spam emails, try using Groupwise rules to filter and delete these unwanted emails. You can find how-to instructions [here](#).

Microsoft Word – Converting a Word

Document to PDF (*valid for MS Word 2002 and Adobe Acrobat 6.0 Pro*)

For instructions on a quick 3 step Word to PDF conversion, click [here](#).

Microsoft Excel - Always in Sight

As your worksheet grows, there comes a point where you can't see the whole thing on screen, and you lose sight of your column and row

headings. This setup makes it difficult to know whether you're in the right column or row. Fortunately, the answer is simple--freeze your headings. Click [here](#) to find out how.

Microsoft Power Point- Make Sure Your Presentation Runs Correctly on Another PC

Ever worked for hours on a presentation adding just the right fonts and sound effects, but when you moved it to the conference room pc you found it had no sound and fonts were just ordinary? When you want to run a presentation on another computer, use the Pack and Go Wizard to put all the required files into one file and copy the file to a disk. You then unpackage the file onto the destination computer and run the presentation. When you package your presentation, you can include any linked files in the package, and if you use TrueType fonts you can embed them as well. Click [here](#) to find out how.

7 Tips to Manage Your Files Better

You work with documents, presentations, graphics, and other files all day. How much time do you spend looking for files? Want to manage your files more effectively? Get tips [here](#)



Available Now



Microsoft Word template for the USDA – ARS

Business Card. To download instructions and the template visit the MSA Computer Help website or click [here](#).

Password Reset Contact Points

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Comments and Contacts:

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